



## Walking the Web 2.0

If you want change, become the change.

**G**REG FARR GETS WEB 2.0. The principal of the Shannon Learning Center, an alternative high school in Haltom City, Texas, has started blogging about his school and other points at a couple of different Weblog sites. He's started a wiki for his staff to use as a way to collect ideas and examples of change. He sends out e-mail podcasts. He's trying to make his own systems paperless. In many ways, he's the first to admit that these new technologies have transformed much of his thinking about education and his own personal learning.

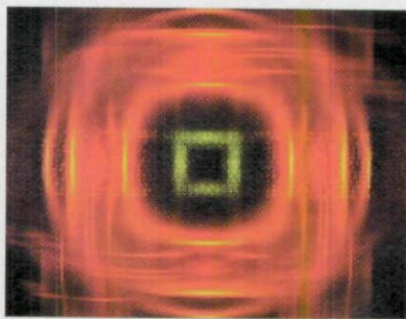
Now he wants his staff to be transformed as well. But as many long-time school leaders know, systemic change is rarely an easy ride.

Farr was hoping his normally "cutting edge" and highly supportive team would follow his lead and dive into these technologies, but instead he found more push back than podcasting. "How will I ever have time to create and maintain a blog?" asked one teacher, somewhat ironically, on Farr's wiki. Another wrote, "Anything I could do with a blog or a wiki I felt like I could do without one, in less time, and without any of the risk accompanying Internet in the classroom."

He was, in a word, stumped. "What had I said or done that caused an otherwise supportive staff to apply the brakes and take a hard look at where I wanted to take them?" he asked on his personal blog.

### Tough Sell

Farr is not alone in asking this question. While more Read/Write Web technologies are seeping into our daily lives, many, if not most, educators are tepid at best about their use in the classroom. The transparent, social and highly collaborative nature of these tools challenges the tenets of the tra-



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ditional classroom and teaching practice.

Yet for those of us who have sipped deeply from the Web 2.0 well, the opportunities seem very obvious. We can easily connect to global communities and teachers. We can use text, photo, audio and video to distribute our ideas to real audiences. Real, powerful learning can ensue. There is a great deal here for our teachers to engage in. This work will do much to help our students navigate a fast and ever changing world.

### RESOURCES

Greg Farr's Blog  
[shannonprincipal.edublogs.org](http://shannonprincipal.edublogs.org)

Leader Talk  
[leadertalk.org](http://leadertalk.org)

Podcasting from a Farr  
[tinyurl.com/22xgbj](http://tinyurl.com/22xgbj)

Shannon Wiki  
[shannon2.wikispaces.com](http://shannon2.wikispaces.com)

### Time is of the Essence

As Farr found out, however, the realities for his staff right now are this: not enough time and too much expectation. "As I visited with staff and friends, it became increasingly apparent that I need to adjust my whole sense of timing on this," he wrote on his blog. "A fair analogy would be to say that as I plan for implementation of Everything 2.0, I want to use a stopwatch. But my staff wants to use a calendar."

But that doesn't necessarily mean reigning in his own learning. In fact, if anything, it makes modeling the use of the tools to learn even more important. "The *real* behavior that leads to change is when the educational leader (superintendent, principal, department chair, etc.) acts as a role model and effectively demonstrates the change and clearly unveils the benefits and inherent reinforcing values resulting from a change," Farr says.

And so he will adjust. "But here's the kicker: I will slow down my expectations for staff, but I will not slow down my personal participation."

And so it should be. As Farr models the uses of these technologies for his staff, he also models them for other administrators who may be wondering about the complexities of this new environment. He makes his struggles clear with the transparency, the safety, and the ethics of the Web, and he engages many others in conversations about the potential outcomes.

So in the end, he's teaching his staff the way. "I will not relinquish the steering wheel of this bus," Farr states. "I might back off the pedal just a smidge, but I refuse to hit the brakes." **DA**

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